



## Kentucky Personnel Cabinet Office of the Secretary

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Crystal Staley  
502-517-6046**



### **Kentucky's Largest Health Plan Adopts Diabetes Prevention Program**

*At least 85,000 members are at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 17, 2015)** – If you could cut the risk of developing a chronic disease in half, would you?

The Kentucky Employees' Health Plan (KEHP) is doing just that — potentially preventing the onset of diabetes by becoming one of the first state health plans in the nation to offer free enrollment in the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP).

"Kentucky, with one of the highest rates of adult diabetes in the country, is leading the way – by helping public employees escape the costly and damaging effects of diabetes," said Personnel Cabinet Secretary Tim Longmeyer. "This is just one of our efforts to support Gov. Steve Beshear's top priority to make public employees a healthier, stronger population to better serve the citizens of the Commonwealth."

The KEHP has used the last two years to conduct DPP pilot projects, and now offers the program to all qualifying members.

Howard Osborne, a retired superintendent and KEHP member, credits his participation in the DPP pilot with adding years to his life. After losing 50 pounds, he is now more mobile, enjoys fishing, mowing the yard and taking vacations with family. Howard and his wife, Linda, have worked together to achieve their wellness goals and make more informed food choices.

"I am thankful for Linda's support," he said. "She wanted to read the program's materials and follow the diet with me. Together we have lost more than 80 pounds. We're living a healthier life and looking forward to watching our grandchildren graduate."

"As Kentucky's largest self-insured health plan, at least 85,000 members are considered at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and qualify for the program," said Joe Cowles, commissioner of the Department of Employee Insurance.

“Many don’t know they have higher than normal blood sugar levels and go undiagnosed,” he said. “We’re taking an active role — providing the wake-up call and a chance to stop diabetes before it starts.”

In 2013, the KEHP selected several members who were at risk of developing diabetes and piloted the program in partnership with King’s Daughters Medical Center in Ashland.

Individuals with prediabetes have an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, which can lead to serious health problems, such as vision loss, lower limb amputations and kidney disease.

A clinical research study, led by the National Institutes of Health and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suggests DPP participants can delay or reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 58 percent. Risk reductions of 71 percent were shown for participants 60 and older.

The 16 weekly DPP courses are led by a lifestyle coach who guides participants in monitoring daily food intake, physical activity and weight loss. Over the course of a year, participants remain active in monthly maintenance classes. The YMCA, one of several national DPP partners, also offers a free 12-week membership at many Kentucky locations to participants who qualify.

The KEHP wellness program, LivingWell, also utilizes the HumanaVitality™ platform to further incentivize participants by rewarding 350 Vitality Points upon completion of the program. Vitality Points convert to bucks that are used to redeem rewards like gift cards, fitness devices and Apple™ products in the Vitality Mall.

The Ashland pilot concluded with participants losing an average of 23 pounds, and increasing their physical activity to an average of 168 minutes a week.

In 2014, the program continued in Ashland and expanded to nine more locations – Bardstown, Berea, Bowling Green, Burlington, Columbia, Fort Thomas, Lexington, Louisville, and Mount Sterling. Thirty-one classes were available to 116 members.

Participants in the second pilot lost an average of 13 pounds, and increased their physical activity to more than 180 minutes per week.

“The program is an important first-step,” said Commissioner Cowles. “Participants are better managing their health and reducing their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.”

The increasing need to curb diabetes rates and health care costs in Kentucky is driving the KEHP’s expansion of the DPP. Referrals to the program are now systematic and obtained through interaction with a registered nurse. Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, the plan’s medical administrator, is currently recruiting members to fill more than 68 classes across the state.

The growth of the DPP goes hand-in-hand with Gov. Beshear’s initiative, [kyhealthnow](http://kyhealthnow.com), which aims to achieve key goals to help reduce Kentucky’s dismal health rankings by the year 2019.

“Recruiting more participants in the Diabetes Prevention Program is one strategy [kyhealthnow](http://kyhealthnow.com) is

leveraging to reduce obesity, which is linked to many chronic diseases, including diabetes,” said Gov. Beshear. “State health leaders have worked diligently to make this program a reality for those individuals in need, and I encourage others to participate in it.”

The Governor signed legislation in 2011 that initiated the Kentucky Diabetes Report. The Personnel Cabinet, home to the KEHP, began partnering with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Department for Public Health, the Department of Medicaid Services, and the Office of Health Policy to compile the report and establish ongoing discussions within state government to address the negative outcomes of diabetes in Kentucky.

It was through this collaboration that the Personnel Cabinet discovered the National Diabetes Prevention Program and launched its own to its members.

“Kentucky has consistently ranked at or near the bottom in the nation for a number of health indicators, including diabetes,” said Cabinet for Health and Family Services Secretary Audrey Tayse Haynes. “Although Kentucky’s diabetes statistics are alarming, the DPP can help us start to reverse the state’s poor health status. And, the state health plan is proving it can be done.”

The national DPP, led by the CDC, aims to prevent or delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes across the United States, and encourages program access. Collaboration among state and federal agencies, community-based organizations, employers, insurers, health care officials, and academia allows the proven program to reach people with prediabetes.

“Research shows that modest weight loss and regular physical activity can help prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes in people with prediabetes,” said Ann Albright, Ph.D., RD, director of CDC’s Division of Diabetes Translation. “As awareness of the national DPP grows, and more Americans are participating in this evidence-based lifestyle program, the better chance we have of turning this epidemic around and improving the lives of people with prediabetes by preventing or delaying the onset of Type 2 diabetes.”

### **More information**

Visit the national [DPP site](#) for information on how to become a participant, coach, benefit provider or partner organization.

KEHP members with questions regarding enrollment may call the customer support line at 1.844.402.KEHP, available Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. or visit <https://LivingWell.ky.gov/Pages/Diabetes.aspx>.

Additional state health plan information can be found at [kehp.ky.gov](http://kehp.ky.gov). KEHP wellness benefits, including the HumanaVitality program, are at [LivingWell.ky.gov](http://LivingWell.ky.gov).

Also, Kentuckians can visit the Kentucky Diabetes Network website, <http://www.kydiabetes.net>. Site resources include: Kentucky’s Diabetes Prevention Program organizations, community events and patient and provider educational materials. The [American Diabetes Association Alert Day®](#) is March 24.

